

WICKED CREATURES TALES | BOOK II

LIES FOR THE CURSED

BELLA DURAND

BOOKS BY BELLA DURAND

WICKED CREATURES TALES

Roses for the Damned

Lilies for the Cursed

Poppies for the Hunted

Daisies for the Broken

Tulips for the Chained

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To the sleeping beauties whose souls were awakened by the dark villain's kiss.

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AUTHOR'S NOTE & CONTENT LISTING

Dear reader, this book contains dark themes and elements that might be triggering or disturbing to some audiences.

Reader discretion is advised.

Subjects include: infertility, gore, elements of horror, death and violence, stalking, explicit sexual scenes and kinks, including somnophilia, edging, and mild blood play.

Any character depicted in a sexual scene is at least 18 years of age.

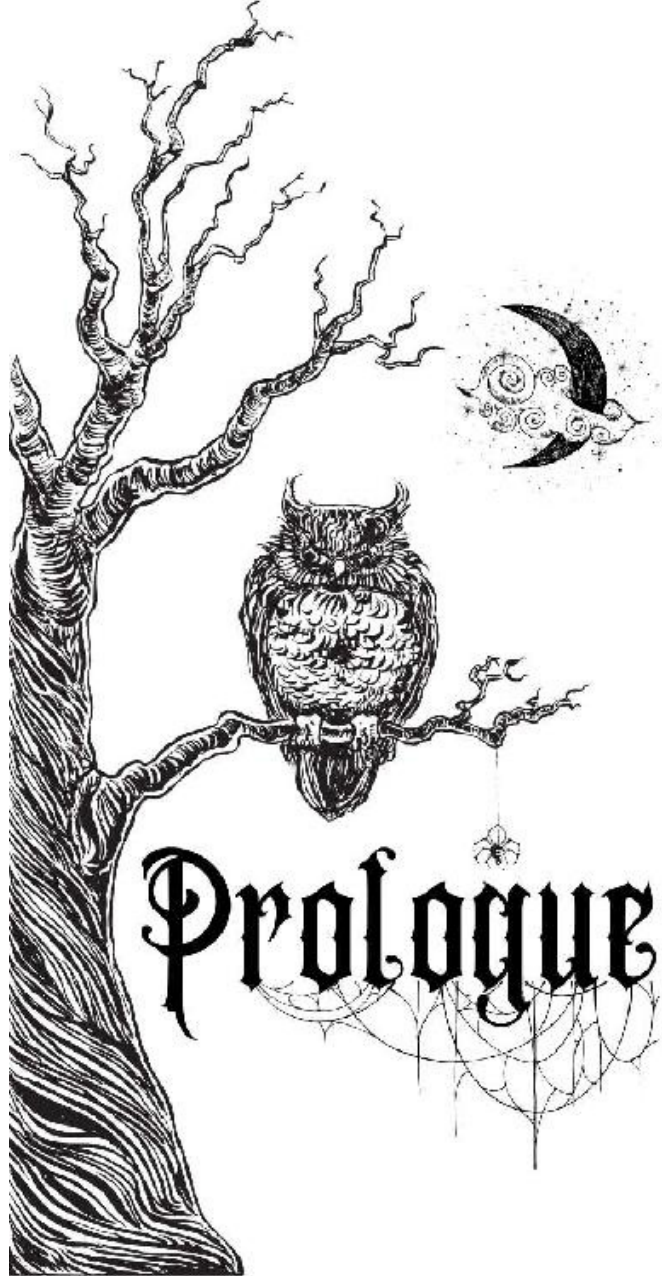
This book is intended for mature audiences only and is not to be used as a reference or guide for safe sex practices.

Foreword

The story of Sleeping Beauty is a classic fairy tale written by the Brothers Grimm, inspired by European traditional folklore.

Originally titled as Little Briar Rose, it is set in the eighteenth century.





Prologue

nce, long ago, there lived a king and queen that were adored by their people in the Kingdom of Anelia. They were honorable and just rulers, Ofavored by both the rich and the poor, always willing to help out those in need, always giving their all to make the people of Anelia content.

But try as they might, they couldn't have a child. Much time passed in hopeless pursuit of the sole happiness that they could never obtain. Witches brewed their potions, seers and oracles chanted their visions. Priestesses blessed their water and food, but to no avail. They had exhausted every option available to them, and still, the queen could not conceive. Their last hope was divine intervention.

And so, the queen prayed to God every night, putting all of her faith in his heavenly guidance and eternal knowledge, hoping against hope that it would be enough to make their one wish come true.

Years came and went in this manner, one where the king began to worry for his young wife and what would become of her should her prayers not be answered.

On the eve of the last day of the seventh year, a beautiful black bird came to rest on the queen's windowsill. It stared at her, its blood red eyes ominous, so still that the queen thought it had turned to stone. Sudden courage struck her as minutes passed, the animal rooted to the spot, its eyes cold and unwavering. Inching closer, she inspected it, the eerie sight making her uneasy and slightly afraid.

Where had it come from?

She had never seen such a species before, its beak elongated and sharp, its plumage so dark that it would be nearly impossible to see the bird at night. Long, sleek feathers made up its tail, with two ebony legs holding its massive body up.

Leaning in, the queen was struck by the color of its eyes. They weren't a solid crimson like she had previously assumed, but instead sprinkled with narrow obsidian lines, the streaks of black running along the iris like an intricate spider's web. What a strange sight, indeed.

What type of bird was it? It was too big to be a crow. Maybe a distant cousin of it—

Pain lashed through the queen as the bird struck her, its sharp beak piercing the delicate skin along the jawline. Deep red blood trickled down her neck as she scrambled backwards, afraid that it would attack her now that the coppery stench of blood permeated the air, but instead, it croaked once more and without a second glance, flew back into the night.

The queen rushed outside, her curiosity getting the better of her as she hopelessly searched the sky for the mysterious bird. Her head felt light, her vision blurring as she swayed on her feet. Blood still dripped down her flesh, staining her pristine canary nightdress. The wind picked up, whipping her long blonde locks around, chilling her skin as a cold breeze swept over her.

Hurrying inside, she quickly changed and tended to her cut, not wanting her dear husband to wake to the ghastly sight of her blood-drenched clothing, and without wasting another moment, quickly climbed into bed, forcing the strange events out of her mind as fatigue finally took over.

The Sun's bright rays woke her too soon, the queen still dazed from sleep. How her body ached, as if a thousand rocks had been thrown at her, her muscles weak, useless. Nausea threatened to empty her stomach's contents.

Never before had she felt so utterly helpless and ill.

Royal healers rushed to their chambers, the king worried for his gentle wife when he saw her terrifyingly pale complexion. After careful inspection, they all came to the same conclusion.

The queen was finally with a babe.

A grand feast was prepared to celebrate the birth of the long awaited princess, with guests and performers from far and wide in attendance. Wine flowed by the gallons. Endless platters of food adorned the long, wooden tables. People rejoiced, dancing with glee, shouting blessings for the queen and the tiny being that slept peacefully in her crib in the middle of the festivities. Perhaps not a wise choice by the proud parents but they knew that no one would harm her, for the child was loved even before it took its first breath, the entirety of the kingdom devoted to its well-being and safety as if it were one of its own and not of royal blood.

Twelve wise women had been called upon to attend the celebrations, to present the miracle child with a blessing and the gift of foresight. Each took their turn in approaching the ivory crib, speaking their words of wisdom while sprinkling a miniscule amount of stardust over the girl's head. Just as Tabitha, the twelfth wise woman, was to take her turn, the doors of the ballroom burst open, freezing everyone to their spot, for Hecate, the thirteenth and most unpredictable wise woman, stood in the entrance, fuming with anger.

You see, dear reader, the king hadn't invited her to his daughter's celebrations, fearing they would turn into an oppressing and grim event, one that would throw a dark shadow over his cherished daughter's birth, for Hecate was an infamous troublemaker, one with a very short temper and ill-reputable persona. It had been foolish, no doubt, for the king to so blatantly insult her, but he had believed his power and absolute authority to be enough to keep Hecate's temper at bay.

If only he knew.

Furious and vengeful, Hecate stormed into the room, spitting vile words and threats at the royal couple who remained unfazed and utterly calm in her terrifying presence. Enraged, Hecate drew her last card. On her twenty-first birthday, the princess would prick her delicate finger on a

spindle, thus ending her life and that of the entire royal family.

Guards rushed in, ready to capture the despicable woman who vanished into thin air before they could reach her, but it was too late, for a curse was already spoken from her lips, one so dark that it shook the entire kingdom to its core.

Tabitha, who still had to bless the child, took it upon herself to try and salvage the situation. She couldn't undo the curse that her sister had uttered for she was no match for Hecate's powers, but she could lessen the blow. And so, a new fate was woven for the princess. She and her royal servants would fall into a deep slumber instead of death's embrace, one that would last one hundred years, only to be awoken by true love's kiss. Tabitha couldn't include the royal couple, for someone must govern the kingdom and keep the princess safe once she fell into sleep.

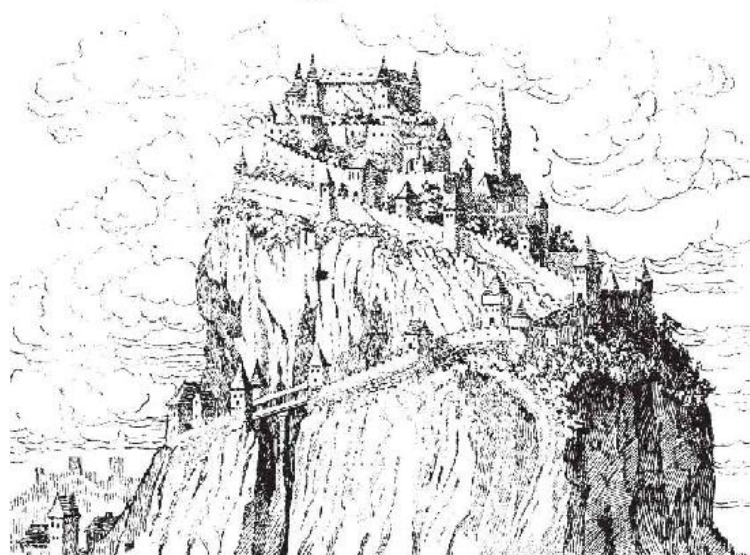
It was the only way to save the child's life.

The king ordered every spindle and spool to be destroyed upon punishment of death. Witches and potion-makers were called upon, working relentlessly day and night for a cure to the princess's unfathomable fate. Whatever they did, the result would always be the same – there was no way to prevent the inevitable, and thus began the countdown that would change the course of history.



Chapter

One



Ch. 1



12 years old

The sweetest melody swept in, jolting her awake. Her lids snapped open, wincing when the bright rays of the early morning light hit her.

"Oh, no."

She must have fallen asleep. It had been late evening when Raina had snuck out of her rooms to go stargazing as she did every night since she could remember. The royal garden was her favorite place to look upon the sky, where she would lie down on the warm grass and stare at the glistening jewels above her, dreaming of what it would be like to be able to spread her wings and fly, to be free and without a care in the world. She would go far away, where curses and spells didn't exist.

Where destiny couldn't find her.

"Raina!" her mother's voice cut through her thoughts. Turning her head, she watched the petite blonde woman rush to her side just as she stood up from the patch of green grass. "What are you doing out here?" Her eyes went wide when she saw the disheveled state that her daughter was in. "What happened to your dress?" fingers latched into the flimsy fabric, spreading it out. "It's all wrinkled and—Oh, no matter, there's no time for you to change. You must go at once, your father is asking for you."

"What, *now*? But the Sun's barely up yet, whatever could be so important—"

"Oh, Raina, for once do as you're told, child. Quickly now!"

Before she even knew what was happening, she found herself in the King's Study, an ornate room reserved for entertaining only the most important of guests in a more private setting, where no one could interrupt the serious conversations that the king might have with his adversaries.

A massive mahogany desk was located at the far end of the wall overlooking the entrance, with an intricately decorated tapestry depicting a roaring lion that covered the entirety of the wall hanging down from the ceiling behind it. A pair of deep purple velvet armchairs faced each other in front of the wooden monstrosity, with immaculately polished wooden flooring adding to the pristine royal touch that always left her father's guests in awe.

An entire wall housing an endless amount of books was to Raina's right, where some of her favorite tomes of long lost creatures and ancient lore were deftly hidden out of sight. Her father's and her little secret, one that not even her mother was aware of.

"Raina," the king addressed her, his hand outstretched as he reached for her, "come here, my child. I'd like you to meet someone."

Uncertain with the situation yet inexplicably trusting her father, she went to him, reaching his side in small, hurried steps. He was a large man, his shoulders wide and powerful, his height intimidating, making Raina feel as small as an ant as she stood by his side, curiously glancing at her hero whose own admiration shone through his eyes as he lovingly gazed back at her.

"This is Andres," her father said, motioning to the stern man that Raina hadn't even realized was standing in the room with them. "He is here to help you."

Raina stared at the king, his words like bolts of nails in her young mind. Help her? Could it be that her father had finally found a way to halt fate's hand?

Did she dare to hope?

Instead of voicing her thoughts, her eyes carefully slid to the man in question. Andres was quite tall, perhaps even taller than the king, but unlike her father, he was slender, with long limbs and a pair of charcoal eyes that seemed to look through Raina as he held her gaze. There was something so unnerving about the way he was looking at her, as if she wasn't a person at all but an object to dissect.

Long midnight blue robes skimmed the pristine floor, his face grave, covered with a neatly trimmed dark beard that matched the color of his long ebony locks. Even at the young age of twelve, she could recognize when something was inherently wrong. Andres was a man with many secrets, his gaze cold and calculating. His presence dark and sinister.

"Your Highness," Andres bowed his head, acknowledging little Raina with an almost mocking tone, "I have long awaited for this day to come. It is my pleasure to finally meet the miracle child of Anelia."

Chills swept over Raina at his words, her gut feeling telling her to run. She turned to her father, silently pleading with him to make this bad man go away, but was struck stupid when she saw the pleased look on her father's face. What was going on?

"Raina," the king crouched down, getting level with her as he tenderly gripped her shoulders, "do you remember the stories, child? The ones that I read to you about far away kingdoms, with dragons and magic?" She nodded, not understanding what he was getting at. They were her favorite ones, as he knew all too well. "Andres is from one such kingdom. He is a wizard. A master of the dark arts." Her eyes popped. "Do not be afraid, he will not harm you. We have a mutual understanding," his icy blue gaze shot to the man in question, a silent threat crossing his features before glancing back at Raina, "He has a solution, child, one that will finally free you of Tabitha's spell. Do you understand?"

Of course she understood. How could she not? Ever since she had been aware of herself and her surroundings, Raina's future was made clear to her so that she would be prepared for when it finally did come, first subtly by her parents then more vehemently by her tutors when they told her of Hecate's curse and how she would have died on her twenty-first birthday were it not for Tabitha and her reversal spell.

Servants whispered in the shadows when they thought she wasn't around to hear their harsh remarks and even crueler words of resentment, for their lives were irrevocably tied to hers. There was no way around it. Even though she had been a mere newborn when the morose events had transpired and therefore had no way of knowing the world around her, everyone blamed Raina's existence for their grim reality.

No one ever went out of their way to make her feel horrible. But she saw how they looked at her, their emotions written all over their faces.

For her father to present her with a possible solution to her tragic life story was a miracle in itself, one that she wasn't willing to throw away, no matter how scary the man that was destined to help her appeared to Raina. She would do anything, anything at all, to prevent the absolute madness that was approaching at the speed of light.

Without another word, she was ushered back out of the study, her small feet taking her to the only place in the entire palace where she felt calm and welcome. Where she didn't have to hide her sorrow from her surroundings.

The royal gardens were a secluded part of the palace grounds where one could enter only by two paths – one was going directly through the most private parts of the palace where the royal family lived, and the other, more unfavorable one, was through the overgrown foliage of trees that lined the property like an unbreachable living wall.

A bed of ivory lilies covered the grass in a thick layer, one so dense that Raina liked to imagine it to be a blanket that she could pull over her head and make herself disappear, never to be found again unless she wished it so.

Soft rustling came behind her, making her spin on the spot. Her breath caught. A boy she had never seen before stood in front of her, his head cocked to the side, as if trying to make out a puzzle of sorts.

"Who are you?" she managed, her voice unsure as she quickly wiped away the lone tear streaming down her cheek.

Matching black garments hung off his tall, lanky frame, his shirt and pants plain yet clearly of high quality, the fabric shimmering in the early morning Sun. Dark hair hung loosely around his young face, the skin like creamy porcelain, his charcoal eyes piercing Raina, reminding her of Andres' but instead of malice, waves of warmth radiated off of him.

"I am visiting with my father," he replied, taking a careful step towards her, as if afraid she might run away at any given moment. "I saw you crying, and wanted to make sure you were alright." He took another step forward. "Are you... alright?"

No, but she was used to feeling so dejected. Just another typical day. "I'm fine, thank you." Always polite, always composed. She wrung her fingers, twisting them in the fabric of her skirt, fidgeting nervously as she cleared her throat. "How did you get here?" He was a stranger, the guards would never let him wander through the palace, especially not long enough to make it into the royal gardens.

She appraised him, inspecting his pristine clothing once more. Not a single wrinkle was visible in the fabric. His skin unmarred, perfect in every way.

A moment of silence passed between them as the tall boy stood observing her, his striking eyes making Raina squirm on the spot, unable to meet his probing gaze.

"Do you cry often?"

Her attention snapped to him, taken aback. "What kind of a question is that? I cry as much as any other twelve year old."

Another step closer. "Your heart is hurting. You're in pain, little one."

Raina froze at his words, her young heart hammering away as the enigmatic boy stopped two feet away from her. She couldn't look away, his keen observation making her question her own family and how well they truly knew her.

How was it that no one had ever noticed her silent suffering, yet this stranger barely had to look at her to see it as clear as day?

"Who are you?" she repeated softly, drinking in his face. From this close, it was evident that he was older than her, not yet a man but

somewhere in between. All sharp lines and full lips. A dreamy appearance, as the young maids would say, someone that Raina was sure she would be swooning over were she, herself, a few years older. He was pretty, she concluded. But it was the eyes that drew her in, ones so full of grief and agony that she found herself questioning what this stranger had gone through to hide such deep torment.

"A friend," he replied, extending a hand toward her, "if you would allow it," opening his palm.

She gasped. A single large petal of her favorite flower lay there, its stunning shade of mulberry leaving her speechless as Raina stared awe-stricken at his hand. Never before had she seen a flower of that color, especially not of a lily.

"It's beautiful, isn't it?" he said, lifting the petal until it was eye level with her, twirling it around in the air as she held her breath. "The sangria lily is a very rare and wondrous flower. A contradiction in itself, if you will. It needs certain conditions in order to blossom and thrive, and yet, at the same time – it does not depend on the Sun to flourish, nor does it need much water to survive." He paused. "It is a strong flower. A resilient species. And still, it chooses to only bloom in my homeland. I take a piece of it with me wherever I go, as a reminder of what I left behind and what awaits me upon my return."

"Do you miss your home?"

A sad smile lifted his red lips. "I miss the people. My mother. The feel of peace," he swallowed, "of safety."

A sudden pang hit her chest. Unconsciously, she rubbed the spot above her heart, sadness washing over her at his admission. She had always felt safe and protected, even when the ugliness of her reality seeped in through the tiny cracks in other people's behavior towards her. They might have resented Raina and blamed her for their misfortune, but no one had ever made her feel threatened or in danger.

"Here," he reached forward, grabbing her wrist. Tiny sparks erupted across her skin where he touched her, shocking Raina, so much so that she couldn't move. He seemed to not have noticed her stiff posture or if he did, made no remark on it, but instead planted the rare petal in her open palm. "This is my gift to you, princess. So that you may think of me whenever you are sad and know that you are not alone." His hand withdrew as she remained frozen, staring at the object.

"But what about you?"

"What about me?"

"Won't you be sad without it?"

"I'll manage. Besides, I think you need it more than me."

She nodded, not knowing what to say. He had gifted her a piece of himself, in a way, something that acted as an anchor, that eased his trepidation when away from the safety of his home. To a complete stranger, a girl that he didn't know anything about, only that she was alone and perhaps as tortured as he was.

A tiny bud of affection bloomed in Raina's heart. "Will you ever come back?" Her lungs constricted. *He has to come back.*

"I don't know. Would you like me to?"

"Yes," she blurted out, feeling like she would burst from anticipation. As unfathomable as it may seem, she had finally found a friend that understood her. She wasn't ready to let him go.

Crouching down so that they were eye level, Raina became very aware of how small she was compared to him, his head at least three inches above hers even in the position in which he was in. "I'll make a deal with you. I will come visit you again next time that my father comes, but only if you promise me that you will not cry over the things that you cannot change." A tear escaped her, one that he wiped away with the pad of his thumb. "No one deserves your tears, little one."

Her heart clenched.

"In return, I promise to bring you back another petal from the sangria lily. That way you have something to look forward to."

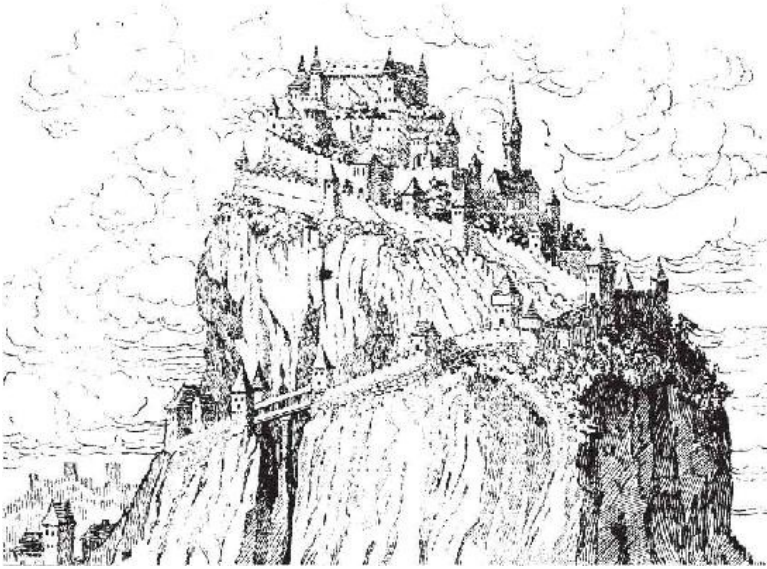
She nodded, holding her breath, as he slowly straightened and ruffled her hair. Watching the boy that had been nothing but kind towards her disappear into the shadows of the thick trees, her mouth bolted shut, not daring to open it lest the truth come out.

She didn't need a petal from him, for it was him that she was looking forward to seeing again, if only for a brief moment in time.



Chapter

Two



Ch. 2



15 years old

he paced nervously along the worn out grass, her slippers digging into the ground with every step that she took. Back and forth she went, ^Ssilently counting the seconds in her head as she awaited.

Three years had gone by in a flash.

Three years since she had been introduced to Andres, the dark wizard that had promised to rid Raina of Tabitha's spell by drinking his mysterious potion. Three years, since she had first seen the boy that had irrevocably stolen her heart.

Draven.

Goosebumps erupted over her skin, his mere name causing her heart to race. Each year he had come to the gardens and, as promised, had gifted her another one of his sangria lily petals. They had talked for hours while Andres – his father, she had learned – conversed with the king, getting to know one another more and more each time.

Even though they had met only a few times, Raina had the undeniable feeling of closeness to Draven, as if they had known each other their entire lives.

He knew all her secrets. All of her deeply rooted fears. It was so easy to open up to him, and Raina had found herself doing so without reservations, his mere presence dissolving all of her worries.

He never judged her, never shunned her or caused her to feel ashamed, merely listened and absorbed her words. And soon, Raina found herself drawn to him in a more profound way. She would catch herself staring at his lips as he talked, imagining what they would feel like. Too often she would lie awake at night thinking about his mouth and his hands; would fall asleep to images of her fingers running through his wild hair as their lips pressed together.

It had been a shock to her when the sudden thoughts had first entered her young mind, but as time went on, she welcomed them, sometimes even seeking them out, until they grew into a living and breathing entity, so powerful that they developed a life of their own, demanding she take action until her fantasies came to fruition.

Doubts plagued her.

Would he push her away if she tried? Too many times she had been tempted, but something always held her back, as if afraid of making a fool of herself. He was older than her by six years, and Raina was sure that she was nothing but a silly child in his eyes. Never had he given her even the slightest inclination that he saw her as anything other than a lonely girl in need of some companionship. He might even pity her for all she knew.

It didn't matter, she supposed. She would never do anything to jeopardize their friendship.

Clasping her hands together, her fingers clutched each other in a vise-like grip, draining the blood from them as Raina anxiously awaited Draven's arrival.

It was way past their usual meeting time. Andres had already administered her the usual spoonful of his potion, her father sending her off on her own once she swallowed it all down. She had rushed out into the gardens without a moment's hesitation, eager to see her dear friend and the

enigmatic man that she now had an almost unhealthy infatuation with.

A soft lilac dress hung off her slender body, her long blonde locks styled into loose ringlets. She had taken special care this morning when getting dressed, wanting to look pretty for Draven. It was wrong, she knew, to want anything from him. He was a man now. And she was still just a foolish girl with her head in the clouds.

Hours passed, Raina's thoughts swirling with possible explanations as to why he still hadn't shown up. Something must have happened, there was no other reason—

"Unless..." She froze, her hands coming up to cover her mouth. Could it be that he had caught on to her rapidly growing feelings? "Impossible." She had been very discreet, had even gone out of her way to make as little eye contact as possible with him unless completely unavoidable.

So, where was he?

"Raina," her mother's cheerful voice called out to her, "come inside dear, you've been standing underneath those trees almost all day. It will be a cold night tonight, you'll catch a fever at this rate. Quickly now."

The Sun was already descending over the horizon, much to her dismay. She had been so caught up in her thoughts of Draven that Raina hadn't even noticed the late hour.

Her heart ached.

He hadn't shown up.

Making her way up to her rooms, she made haste in getting ready for bed. She was exhausted, mentally more than physically.

Worry bloomed in her chest.

Maybe something terrible *had* occurred that had prevented him from showing up? Shaking her head to herself, she quickly dismissed the notion. Andres had shown no signs of distress on his weathered face, not even a hint at something being amiss. Raina had a feeling that the man wasn't the sentimental type, but surely he would have had a change in his demeanor at least if something had happened to his son.

Flapping interrupted her ponderings.

Her gaze shot to her window where a large black bird had taken up residence, its ominous shape causing chills to spread through her body.

It turned its head. She gasped, its blood red eyes piercing her as they stared at each other.

"Where did *you* come from?" Gaping as if she'd never seen a bird before, Raina ever so slowly crawled towards it, making sure to take her time so as to not frighten away the animal. "You're not from around here, are you?" No, it wasn't, for it was a species that she had never before seen in her short life of fifteen years.

Stopping about a foot from it, she sat back down, crossing her legs beneath her as she inspected the bird. It looked like a crow but it couldn't be, for crows were much smaller in size, and this bird took up at least a third of her window, blocking Raina's view of the night sky. She was tempted to touch it, to stroke its soft feathers, but something kept her glued to the spot on the floor, not allowing her to act on her impulses.

A loud croak jolted her back.

Squinting, she noticed that something had fallen out of its massive beak. Her courage failed her, not daring to approach and inspect the multiple objects that lay scattered just beneath her windowsill.

"Will you attack me if I come closer?" It stared at her, not moving. "Did you bring me something?" Croaking, it flapped its wings. "You did, didn't you?" She leaned forward, her eyes locked on the animal as she reached, fingers wrapping around the item closest to her.

Velvety softness pressed against her palm, its shape somehow familiar as Raina tried to make out what it was without looking down at it, for she knew that the moment her gaze wandered from the creature perched on the window in front of her, it would pounce on her.

Time slithered in this manner, the two of them locked in a battle as neither one of them broke eye contact. Minutes. Hours. Maybe even days, passed, until finally the bird relented, and spreading its ebony wings wide, flew back out into the night.

A sigh of relief left her, not realizing that she had been holding her breath the entire time. Her eyes dropped to the floor and to the item still locked in her fingers, a million different emotions swarming her system when she realized what they were.

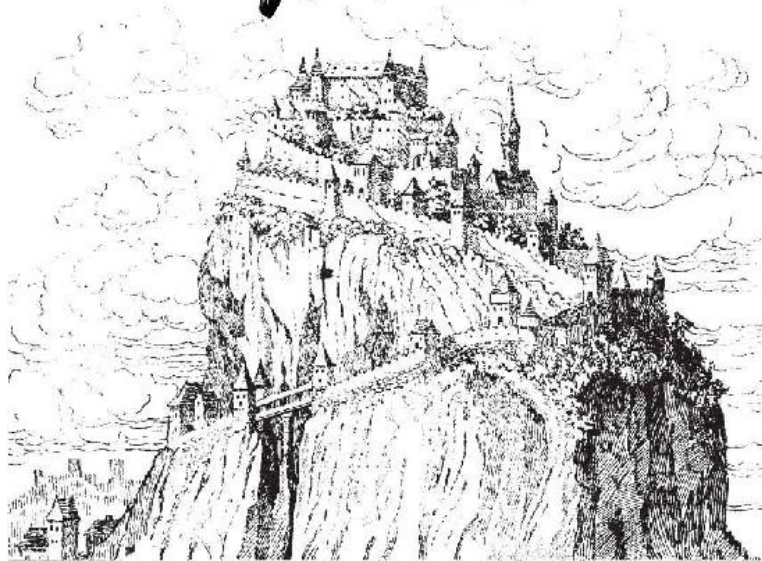
Mulberry lily petals by the dozen lay scattered all around her, their deep red shade like splatters of blood on her pristine ivory floor.



Chapter



Three



Ch. 3



20 years old

“Where are you going, Raina? The guests are still here, they’ll wonder where you’ve disappeared off to.”

“The guests will be here until the early morning hours, mother,” she grumbled, already moving away from the table, “And I doubt that any of them will even notice me gone in the state that they’re in.” A man half drunk stumbled into a nearby chair, apologizing to the piece of furniture for hitting it. She lifted a slender eyebrow at the queen, the comical scene proving her very point. “Good night.”

Not waiting another moment, Raina rushed out of the grande ballroom, her ears ringing with the almost deafening noise of the festivities. The whole kingdom was celebrating her twentieth birthday as if the moment of truth wasn’t fast approaching, and she wanted nothing to do with it.

Stars shone across the night lit sky, shimmering brightly like the most exquisite diamond jewels. She would always be captivated by them and the magnificent sight that not even her mother’s crown could compare to.

A cool evening breeze swept over her bare shoulders causing her to shudder. Shivers erupted across her skin. Hugging herself tightly, Raina closed her eyes, inhaling the flower infused evening air.

“Where are you?” she whispered to the wind, her thoughts flooding with the dark haired boy whose eyes still haunted her in her sleep.

Six years had gone by since she last saw Draven. Six agonizingly long years, since she had last talked to him. She had been a child at the time, but she will never forget the feelings of affection and belonging that he had evoked in her, even then. And he would never know the extent to which her entire world had revolved around him.

Sometimes, she found herself questioning if he even existed, if she had perhaps imagined those days of happiness. Were it not for the heap of mulberry colored petals locked away in her dresser, she would doubt her own sanity.

“I miss you,” the words left her, her heart stuttering as the air around her shifted. Her skin tightened. Flames burning across her flesh as soft lips brushed against the shell of her ear.

“Happy birthday, Petal.”

Gasping, her lids snapped open as she spun around, massive hands gripping her shoulders, pulling her flush against a hard body.

Charcoal eyes rimmed in ruby red connected with her blue ones, the face staring back at her completely foreign yet strangely familiar all at once. Her neck craned back as she inspected the man before her, drinking in the godly sight as strong arms snaked around her waist, locking together at the small of her back.

Shoulder length dark brown hair framed a chiseled masculine face, the straight nose connecting to pale pink, full lips. A sharp square jaw was covered in dark stubble, Raina’s face heating as her mind already imagined the delicious burn marks that it would leave on her inner thighs as he licked her pussy dry.

Skin like porcelain practically glowed under the moonlight, perfectly unmarred except for the long, narrow scar that cut across his left eyebrow, ending just below the eye.

Strong broad shoulders that filled out a deep purple button up shirt were covered by an ebony long robe that slightly swayed in the wind.

Planes of hard muscle pressed up against her, her soft curves purring in ecstasy at the stark contrast where their bodies connected.

“Who are you?” she muttered low, her heart hammering away as her palms rested on his chest.

He grinned, revealing a pair of slightly elongated and highly lethal looking canines. “You know who I am, princess,” a voice like smooth gravel replied, her nipples tightening in response as the harsh vibrations rippled under her hand.

A sudden whooshing sound cut through her uncertainty. Her gaze slid behind him where two massive shadows loomed like silent sentinels, only to realize that they weren’t shadows at all but a pair of enormous black wings, the feathers so dark that they seemed to almost blend in with the night sky.

“You have wings,” she exclaimed, breathless, as her hand reached forward, the sudden urge to touch them overruling the impossible implications of witnessing something that she had only read about in her father’s old books.

“Careful, princess.” Her brows furrowed. “You shouldn’t go touching them unless you’re prepared for the consequences.”

Unsure, her fingers retracted, returning to their previous spot on his firm chest. “What do you mean?”

He smirked, leaning in to mutter softly in her ear, “My wings are very sensitive.” His nose grazed her neck, inhaling her scent. “When you stroke them, it feels like you’re stroking my cock.” She gasped, he chuckled, “I will get hard and since there is no one else here to help me out, it will fall on you to ease the pressure.” She held her breath. “Don’t be too disappointed, Petal. As much as I’d love for you to wrap those pretty lips around me, I’d much rather prefer our first time be somewhere more secluded, where I can devour you in peace before I bury myself in your sweet cunt.”

Heat erupted all over her, his words igniting an inferno within her blood that she had been suppressing ever since she could remember.

Raina was no stranger to sex, she had secretly fooled around with men on a number of occasions, had even lost her virginity at the ripe age of eighteen, not wanting to risk Andres’ potion not working and not having any of her fantasies fulfilled before falling victim to Tabitha’s spell. But none of her partners had ever used such crude words, words that had her core clenching and pulse racing.

Shame filled her.

She was so obscenely wet. All because of this beautiful stranger. “You can’t speak to me like that.”

“You’re right, I have much better use for my mouth.”

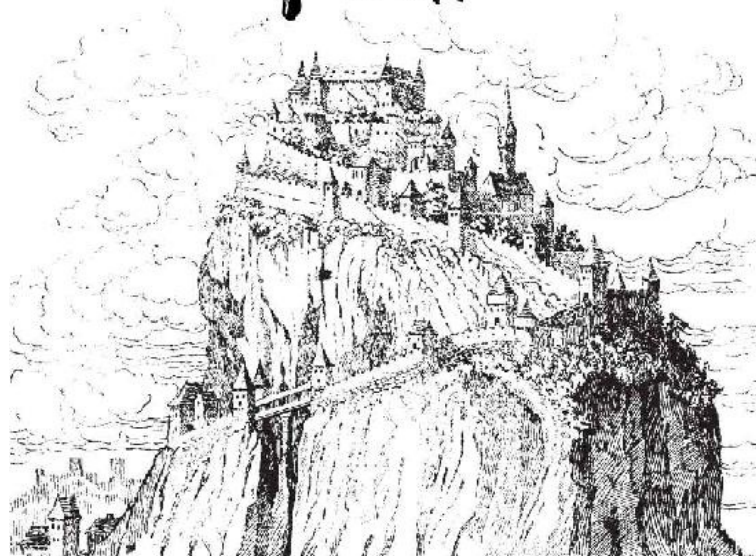
She pushed him, blushing when she saw the knowing look in his eyes, as if able to read her mind. “Stop it, you don’t even know me.”

“Don’t I, princess?” his grip tightened around her, lips grazing hers as he spoke, “You might have grown up and become a stunning young woman, but your heart is the same as it was all those years ago. And I know it as if it were my own, little one.”



Chapter

Four



Ch. 4



er breath hitched, lungs straining against her ribs as she searched his face. There was only one person that had ever called her that.

H “Get away from me,” she pushed him again, furious. With Draven for abandoning her when she had needed him the most. For making her believe that she was special. With herself, for her own stupidity, allowing the man that had broken her fragile heart to lure her in so easily once more.

You’ll never learn.

“Raina—”

“You left me!” she shouted, blood boiling from anger as he finally released her. “Without an explanation, without ever saying goodbye. After everything that I shared with you, as if it meant nothing.”

“You were so young, I had no choice.”

Her heart ached, for the man that stood before her and for the girl that she had been. “You were my friend, I thought you cared about me.”

“I did,” he stepped closer, “I still do, princess.”

“You’re six years too late.” A tear threatened to escape her then, the familiar scene from how they had originally met making an appearance in her mind as she fought to regain her composure. “I’ve moved on, forgotten all about you. I don’t need your friendship anymore.” *Lies. All lies.* “Please leave.”

“Little one—”

“Don’t call me that!” her voice cracked, memories flooding her mind, of the countless hours that they had talked in that very same garden, sharing their inner demons. Of the warmth and love that had flooded her whenever she had been in his presence. Of the heartache, that had washed over Raina once she had realized that he was never coming back, that he had cut her out of his life without an ounce of remorse. “Why are you here? What do you want?”

Silence met her, his gaze intense. Piercing. As if trying to strip down the twenty foot high walls that she had erected around her heart once more.

Pointing at Draven’s wings, she asked, “What is this?”

A step forward. “I’m not human, princess.” His words cut through, causing her to halt her rantings. “It’s one of the reasons why I couldn’t come to see you sooner. That, and the fact that you had grown attached to me.” His steps resumed, his movements slow and deliberate. “I’m much older than you, Raina, the difference even more obvious when we first met. I couldn’t give you what you wanted from me. It would have been wrong, you know this to be true. I didn’t want to give you false hope.”

Her throat dried up, his closeness setting her nerve endings on fire. “What do you mean you’re not human?” Her fists clenched, fingers itching to touch him, mind demanding she resist, not knowing what to make out of his admission that she purposely chose to ignore. At war with herself and if she should be relieved that he hadn’t taken advantage of her vulnerability and innocence to ruin her completely beyond repair, or if she should

be disappointed that he had thought her too childish and not worth his time. “How do you have wings?”

A heavy sigh left him, his gaze dropping to somewhere behind her for a brief moment before sliding back to her inquisitive stare, as if unsure if he should reveal his truth. “I am a hybrid, Raina.” He swallowed, the movement pulling her eyes to his thick neck corded with muscle. “My mother was the result of a demon and vampire breeding, one that should have prevented her from ever being able to conceive, but then she met my father, a powerful dark wizard that fed her his experimental potions, making it possible for her to carry a child – me. She died when I was young, once my father realized that she couldn’t have any more children and was of no use to him anymore.”

Nauseous at the underlying meaning of his eerie words, she could only stand there, staring at him. Praying that she had misunderstood. “What are you saying, Draven?”

Knuckles grazed her cheek, his eyes trailing the movement. “I was born as a result of my father’s sick greed and absolute need to control life and everything that it encompasses.” His fingers spread, palming her face. “I got my wings when I matured. The last time that you saw me, only the buds were showing at my back, but they were still too small to be noticeable under my clothes. They became more prominent as months passed by.”

Her mind spun, trying to recall the last time that they had seen each other.

“Before she died, my mother had told me about the many changes that would be happening to my body, about the different phases and what I should expect. The first year after my species gets their wings, they are at their most vulnerable. The appendages are still very weak, making us an easy target for poachers.”

“You’re hunted?”

He nodded, continuing his perusal of her face with his fingers. “For centuries humans, other vampires, and demons alike have tried to kill us off. We are a priceless *relic*, if you will. Any one of them could attack us before full maturity, we would be defenseless against them. The baby wings drain our energy, increasing our need for fuel tenfold. And seeing as I am part vampire...” he trailed off, “I needed to feed more than ever before. My urges were out of control. I had no way of suppressing them. If I had come to you in that state, I would have endangered you.”

Shaking her head, she couldn’t bring herself to believe it. “No, you wouldn’t have, I know you.”

Pain laced his handsome features. “I wouldn’t have been able to resist your human blood, Raina. I could have attacked you.”

“Do you still have those urges?”

His lips tipped up, her heart skipping at the sight. “I have learned to control them. The need to feed still exists but it’s not unbearable like it was while my wings were growing. It doesn’t come suddenly or in waves, nor does it last for unknown periods of time, but rather slowly creeps up on me, giving me enough time to find a source of food.”

“You mean, humans?”

He shrugged. “Humans, vampires, animals, whichever is available at the given moment. Animal blood is the safest, but there are vampires and humans who willingly let us feed from them.”

Curious and somewhat taken aback by his blunt honesty, she prodded some more, “How does it work exactly?”

He stepped fully into her, the heat of his body hitting Raina like a ram as only a sliver of space separated them. Fingers grazed her neck, Draven’s gaze heavy as it trailed across her skin. “I drink from the source, princess. Usually it’s from the wrist, as it’s the easiest to access,” his hold tightened, gripping her throat as her pulse beat frantically under his touch, “The neck is the richest source for fresh blood because the vessels are the largest in this part of the body, the feeding needing to last but mere moments for a vampire to replenish himself. Then there are the inner thighs,” his hand stroked her leg, “and behind the knees.”

She swallowed, Draven’s movements leaving a trail of desire behind. “How do you feed?”

Grinning wildly, he lowered his head, burning her with his stare. “Quite the inquisitive one, aren’t you?” his voice lowered, barely a whisper now, “I bite into the flesh, sweetling, sucking until my reserves are filled.”

A storm erupted inside of her, her clit throbbing painfully. Erotic images assaulted her, of sharp fangs piercing her skin, drinking her life’s essence as the sinful man in front of her fucked her without abandon.

A devious chuckle escaped him. “You’re blushing, Petal. Does it excite you, to imagine me feeding from you?”

“Absolutely not.”

His grin widened, her pussy clenching in response. “Come now, no need to lie. Tell me what caused your skin to flush so prettily, and if you tell me the truth, I’ll even give you a reward.”

If there ever was a doubt in Raina’s mind about her buried feelings potentially returning if she ever were to face Draven again, it evaporated into thin air like wisps of smoke, her emotions raging inside of her, stronger than ever before, as if six years hadn’t passed since she last saw him.

It was dangerous.

Consuming.

Threatening to disrupt the delicate balance between reason and wanting. She couldn’t allow herself to get invested again, for she feared she wouldn’t be able to recover for a second time were he to abandon her once more.

Squaring her shoulders, she took a step back, giving herself a much needed break from Draven’s magnetic presence. “It is getting late. I must return, my father will be looking for me.”

His eyes flickered with an unknown emotion, disappearing so quickly that she wasn’t sure if she had imagined the whole thing. “Is King Roderick still making you drink my father’s potion?”

"Yes, of course. He never allows me to miss it."

"Don't."

Her brows furrowed in confusion. "What?"

"Don't drink it anymore. It's useless. It won't stop the spell from coming to fruition."

"How do you know this?" The tiny hairs on her neck shot up, standing erect as she waited for his answer.

"Because my blood is in it, little one. And it can't save you. Not from your fate, and certainly, not from me."

She froze, too shocked to move.

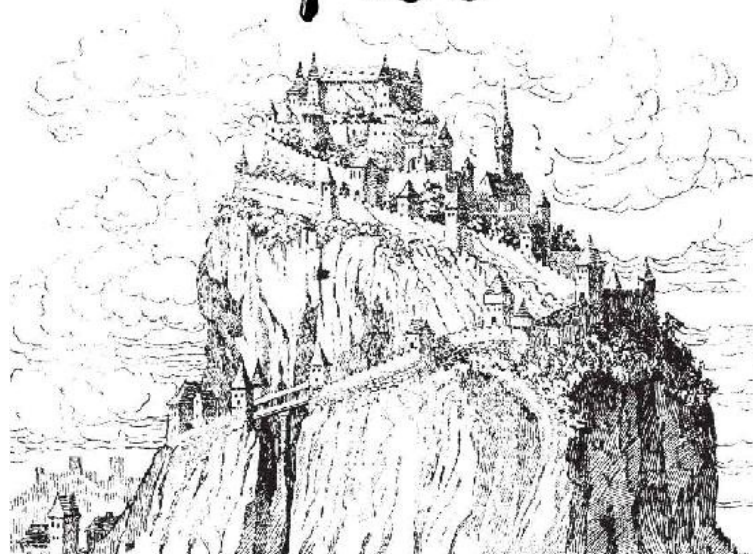
Even when his mouth connected with hers, firmly pressing a gentle kiss to her warm lips, stripping her walls bare and leaving her heart wide open for him to squash once more, she could only stare ahead.

Wondering, as he disappeared into the dense shadows of the familiar trees, taking all trace of the winged half-god with him, if she was perhaps asleep in her bed, blissfully dreaming, or if he had only been a wishful apparition, and she had finally lost her damn mind.



Chapter

Five



Ch. 5



he trees parted, their thick trunks bending at an unnatural angle as they made way for his big frame.

T

An entire day had passed since he had last walked the enchanted path. The longest that he'd ever been away from *her*.

For the past two years he had watched the sheltered princess from the shadows of the woods, lurking in the fucking dark like some social deviant. Savoring the sight of her mouth-watering curves that had enticed him to the point of madness ever since she had fully matured. It had taken every bit of his self-control to not take his cock out right there in the forest and beat off to the sight of her unsuspecting form.

It wasn't his usual behavior, to hide and merely observe his prey. For him to have been doing it for exactly twenty four months was an unprecedented occurrence, one that had come to a sudden end when Raina had called out to him the night before. Completely unaware that the man that she was aching for had been silently stalking her from beyond the cover of the trees.

His fingers twitched, itching to touch her. To suck on her pert nipples as his fat cock pounded her tight cunt.

He groaned, drool collecting in his mouth, cock jerking against the seam of his trousers. He had been perpetually hard for the last two years, his cock demanding he stick it in the first available hole and relieve himself instead of walking around with a painful erection that only seemed to deflate when the golden temptress wasn't in his vicinity or when her angelic face wasn't dominating his thoughts.

Too bad for his dick then, for Draven wasn't going to fuck just anyone. Not when he had Raina.

A branch smacked him across the face, too lost in his filthy fantasies and all the depraved ways that he was going to claim his little bird.

Oh, how she would plead for mercy as he took her to the edge of sanity and back. His fangs latched around that delicate neck of hers. Draining her ambrosial blood as he filled her with his cum before pushing her over into blissful oblivion, with only Draven there to catch her and pull her back to the land of the living.

He would become her lifeline, her sole tether to the world. Breathing life into her starved soul as she mended his own shattered one every time that she gave a piece of herself to him.

Her heady scent still lingered in his nostrils, taunting him. Daring him to do *something* other than just stand there like a fucking spineless insect, the way that he had the night before as Raina pushed him away.

Teeth grinding at the memory, he stalked forward through the foliage.

That had been the last time that he would allow her that freedom. The last time that he would be compliant and yielding to such ridiculous wishes. She was *his*, it would be pointless to fight it, and the sooner she accepted it, the better.

Were it not for his carefully mastered self-restraint he wouldn't have wasted a single moment in sampling her right there on the grass before the time was right. It would have undoubtedly ruined his meticulously crafted plan, and he couldn't have that.

Not when he was so close to his end goal.

As if conjured up by Draven's obsessive thoughts, the object of his adoration stepped out into the private gardens, her beautiful large eyes nervously darting around.

My, my, looking for me already, are we, sweetling?

He smirked in satisfaction, knowing that the little temptress couldn't stay away from him. She could spin any lie that she wanted to in hopes of placating her need to feel in control of the situation, but no amount of time nor distance could ever change Raina's feelings for him. And if she needed a little push in the right direction to admit them to herself, he was more than willing to provide it for her.

The sounds of her short breaths snapped Draven to attention. She was so close to his hiding place, her lungs straining as they worked overtime while she searched her surroundings. Completely unaware that the real danger was in the trees behind her. All it would take would be one quick snap of his arm in her direction, and she would be completely at his mercy.

A low chuckle escaped him.

He counted the seconds, inching closer to her trembling frame. She could sense him, no doubt, for her heart to be beating so violently. Even if she were to turn around right at that very moment, there would be nothing but a pitch black void to meet her inquisitive stare.

That sweet, intoxicating essence that pumped through her veins assaulted him as he leaned in all the way to inhale her, his cock leaking like the needy bastard that it was, desperate to sink into her delicious warmth.

Soon.

He cracked his neck. It was time.

His hand lashed out, wrapping firmly around Raina's mouth as his other arm snaked around her middle. Dragging her thrashing form back into the dense woods and away from the only home that she knew.

He never said that he was a good male.

Quite the contrary.

And as luck would have it, his little petal was just about to discover the true depths of his depravity.



Chapter

Six



Ch. 6



er breathing evened out, signaling to Draven that the struggle had finally left her.

For nearly an hour, Raina had thrashed and kicked, attempting to dislodge herself from his tight grip. It had been useless, of course, but he had to applaud her iron will and determination for putting up a fight for as long as she had.

If only it hadn't been him that she was up against, she might have even stood a chance and actually gotten away. But, unfortunately for her, she didn't have such luck. Draven had been ready to hold her against him for the entire night if he had to until she finally admitted defeat.

Once again, too bad for her.

Her shoulders slumped, body weakening as she fought to remain upright.

"I'm going to release you now, little one," he said as she went still in his arms. "Don't do anything stupid like trying to run away."

Not that it would do her any good. They were deep in the woods, surrounded by ancient trees that blocked out almost all light from the Moon. The farthest she'd get would be the nearest tree before the complete darkness turned her right back around into Draven's awaiting arms.

She glanced around, noticing the same thing. "Why have you brought me here?" her voice lacked the expected strength behind it, as if not at all disturbed with her current situation.

Interesting.

Eyes gaping, chest heaving, she took a step back.

"Don't," he warned, dick already hard as stone as the thrill of a possible chase loomed over him.

"I-I don't know what you want from me," her breath came in quick exhales now, her round breasts pushing up against the bodice of her ivory nightgown. Threatening to spill over as she continued to walk away from him.

"Raina," he growled, not wanting to unleash his inner monster on her just yet.

Her back hit the trunk of a tree, gasping when he appeared right in front of her. "How did you move so fast?"

Long fingers wrapped around her throat, pushing her into the bark as he stepped right up to her. "I'm a vampire, princess. You keep forgetting that." She swallowed. "Does that frighten you? To know that you're all alone with a monster, with no way of escape?" He leaned in, licking her neck. "That no matter how loud you scream, no one would be able to hear you?" A low moan escaped her as he rolled his hips, grinding his erection into her stomach, "Can you feel what you do to me, Petal? How hard I am for you?" dragging his tongue over her jaw, licking a trail to her parted lips. "I've watched you for so fucking long, waiting for the right time to make you mine." Teeth sunk into her bottom lip, pulling on it slightly before releasing the flesh. "Do you know what that does to a male like me? To not be able to touch you? Kiss you—" his tongue swept over her lips "—fuck you?" His cock jerked, seeping from the tip as he began to move against her.

"This is so wrong—" her head fell back against the tree, whimpering. She closed her eyes, biting her lip until a speck of blood formed on it.

"No, princess, this is as right as it will ever be," his tongue lashed out again, brushing across the puncture wound, "So fucking divine," lapping at it like a starved animal.

"Don't," she begged him, her eyes snapping open. Slight fear flashed in them.

That won't do.

"I will never drink your blood without your consent, Raina. That is where I draw the line, do you understand? Everything else is mine." His hands glided down her arms, "Your skin," lifting up the hem of her nightgown, "your flesh," diving in to capture her mouth, "your heart." His tongue swept along the seam of her lips, swooping in once she opened for him. Their tongues clashed, ravishing each other like hungry beasts.

Hands wrapped around his neck, fingers digging into his scalp. He lifted her legs, wrapping them around his middle as he continued to grind into her pulsing center. Heat radiated off of her, his dick throbbing painfully against her.

Not yet.

He needed her desperate. Tortured. Completely obliterated from desire for him like he had been for her.

Hands roamed up her thighs, hitching up Raina's nightgown. His knee came up, planting her ass on it as he moved her panties to the side. His breath caught, her glistening pink pussy on display.

"Drenched through already." His thumb found her swollen clit, pressing on it as he drew circles over the little nub.

Loud moans met his movements, Raina's mouth wide open as he increased his pace. His forehead rested on hers, absorbing the sounds coming out of her. "At a loss of words, princess?" His gaze dropped to her spread legs as he pushed a thick digit into her soaked center. "Look at that, such a greedy little cunt, sucking in my finger so eagerly."

"Oh, fuck," she barely managed to say before he added a second one, pumping them thoroughly. Slick coated his fingers, gushing out of her pussy with each new thrust.

"Such filthy words from such a sheltered little bird." He licked her jaw, then dove in, plundering her mouth. Sliding a third finger in, stretching her wide open for him.

Obscene slurping noises filled the air around them. His fingers knuckle deep, fucking her as if it were his cock inside of her. She began to move, meeting his motions as her hips ground down, her arms locked around his neck as she held on for dear life.

"Does my little petal need more?" She nodded, whimpering. A bead of sweat trailed down her face. He licked it, savoring the salty taste. "Too bad, princess. You don't get my big cock until you admit that you're mine. That you've *always* been mine." His thrusts turned rapid, the pressure on her clit in tandem to his pumping fingers. "Now, either you say it and I fill your tight cunt, or refuse, and you don't get to come."

Milk drizzled from his mushroomed head, soaking his pants. If he continued on like this he would burst before he even got a chance to feel her pussy wrap around him. And that won't do. "Say it, Raina."

Shaking her head, she refused to do as he demanded.

Growling, he stilled, his fingers lodged in her pulsing core. She was so close, he could feel it. "Say. It."

"No."

Thrusting again, he resumed a much languid pace, building her up again until he felt her walls beginning to lock around him. He stopped once more, pulling his fingers out all the way.

She cried out, her face taut. "Please," her voice shook, eyes half closed as she stared at him. "It hurts so much."

All three fingers slid back in, his cock jutting out against his pants, as if trying to rip a hole through the fabric and plant itself in her swollen center.

"You know what you have to do, princess," he ground his painful erection into her hip as he played with her clit, pumping in tandem. His tongue lashed out, licking a trail up her throat before nibbling on her ear. "I have all the patience in the world. We can do this again tomorrow, and the day after that. For an entire month if we have to. I've waited two fucking years to have you squirming on my fingers, I can wait another hundred before you finally break around my cock. Question is," she mewled as her orgasm approached, still refusing to say those three little words, "can you?" He pulled out.

A strangled noise left her, her whole body drenched in sweat. Without a word she pounced on him, pulling him flush. Their mouths collided, tongues tangling.

A sudden jolt to his dick froze him, his body going still as a new sensation took over. It felt like his entire shaft was being wrapped up in the smoothest silk, impossibly soft yet torturously firm at the same time. Waves of pleasure washed over Draven as ghost fingers pumped his leaking cock.

“Wicked little bird,” his fingers drove into her sobbing cunt once again, determined to make her pay for disobeying him, “what did I tell you about touching my wings?”

A sinister grin plastered itself on her flushed face. “It’s only fair, wouldn’t you say?” Feathers glided under her abled hands, her fingers dancing in between as she gripped a handful and began to stroke them as she would a cock.

Pleasure spiraled through him. “Only problem with that, princess—” a fresh stream of arousal flooded his pumping digits “—is that I can withhold my orgasm for as long as I like. Time is of no consequence to me. Why blow a load in my pants when I can do so in your pretty little pussy?” She bit his bottom lip. He hissed, his cock jerking in response. “Stubborn girl. Say the fucking words. Let me feel your heavenly warmth, put us both out of our misery.”

“No,” she moaned, barely holding on as her eyes rolled back. “You’ll leave again.”

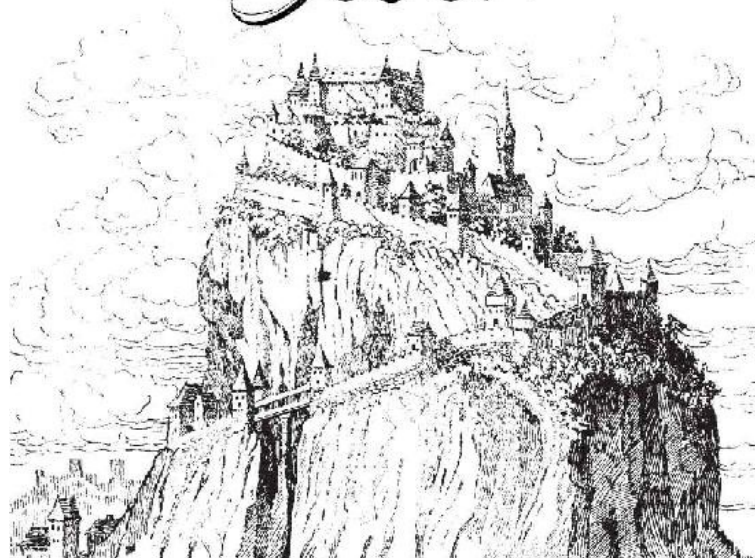
Withdrawing his fingers before the tide could consume her, he released her. Taking a step back as he dragged Raina’s trembling form back through the dense woods and into her private gardens. Crushing their lips together before he finally admitted, “I will, Petal, but this time, when I do, I will be taking you with me.”



Chapter



Seven



Ch. 7



taring at the two people across from him, he realized how very different his little bird was compared to them.

S

Although the woman was quite attractive for her age and had the same long blonde locks and creamy skin as Raina, she lacked the haunted look in her eyes that had captured Draven's attention and caused his protective side to come out from the very first day of meeting the princess.

Sliding his gaze to the formidable male sitting behind the massive mahogany desk, he searched his features. Dark hair curled around his thick neck, his icy blue eyes trained on Draven as he shot daggers in his direction.

"Why have you come, boy?" The stern voice would have probably sent him running for the hills were Draven a lesser man, one that hadn't endured the horrors and sick experiments that he had at a young age at the hands of his very own father. Instead, it only amused him as he continued to inspect the king.

Same blue eyes. But not nearly as tortured as hers.

"Tell me, Your Majesty," he started, "what did my father promise you in exchange for your riches?"

The king's eyebrows shot up, not able to hide his surprise. A moment passed before he answered, "You'll have to be more specific, I'm afraid. Who, exactly, are you talking about?"

The poor bastard doesn't recognize me. He sighed. Or maybe he does, and is merely biding his time while he thinks of an answer. "Did he tell you that his potion would help Raina? That she would be free of the curse?"

Shock colored King Roderick's aging face. Speechless, he tried to regain his composure before displaying his usual stoic expression. "Sybil, leave us."

The queen gawked, mimicking her husband's previous expression. "Surely, you cannot mean to indulge this—this—" appalled, her hands swept through the air as she motioned at Draven, as she searched for the correct term to describe him. He cocked his head, waiting patiently to hear the word that she would eventually settle on. "—monster!"

Grinning like a madman, Draven could only laugh at her lack of originality. "This *monster* is the reason your daughter will live to see her twenty-second birthday." His smile fell. "Say thank you like a good royal puppet."

"Why, you—"

"Sybil!" the king roared, his face turning livid.

Smirking, Draven lounged back in his armchair, his wings hanging down over the sides as he stared her down. "You heard the man. Run along now, bitter queen."

He wasn't obnoxious by nature. He rarely felt the need to cause an altercation, even less to resort to insults. But the foreign monarch's clear distaste and lack of empathy for his kind – and therefore, other beings as well – grated on his nerves, to the point where he could no longer hold his tongue.

Raina doesn't belong with them.

Even more proof that he was doing the correct thing.

Stunned at her husband's further lack of action to Draven's harsh words, the queen stomped out of the study like a petulant child.

"If you were any other man I would have your head on a spike by now for speaking to my wife like that."

"Unfortunately for you then. We both know that it would take more than that to kill me."

"What is it that you want, Draven?"

"So you do know who I am."

"Yes, I recognized you. Although, I must say, you've changed quite a bit since the last time you were here, in this room."

"I imagine so." He ground his teeth. "I'm no longer a naive boy that can be manipulated."

"I am sorry," the king said, his voice dropping an octave, "for the things that your father put you through. For using you in this manner. But you have to understand one thing," his cold eyes pierced him from across the table as the king leaned forward, "I do not regret it. I would do *anything* for Raina. Anything at all. Even take the lives of innocents if it meant she would get to see another moonrise."

Draven smiled wickedly, the king unknowingly falling into his trap. *Arrogant and proud. He will be his own downfall.* "Then you won't have anything against me taking your daughter to my homeland and making her my wife."

Ever so slowly, Roderick rose to his feet, bracing his hands on the smooth table top as he seethed, "First you insult my queen, and now you insult me. Do you not value your life?"

He shrugged carelessly. "We both know you won't do anything to me. After all, it is my blood that is preventing Tabitha's spell from coming to fruition." Lies. But the king didn't need to know that. "Were something to happen to me, you would also be dooming your precious offspring. After all, you can't use a dead person's blood to fight off ancient magic."

How stupid they were. Every last one of them. Believing the rantics of a crazed wizard.

Draven's blood was incapable of halting destiny, the very same lie that his father had naively fed King Roderick all those years ago.

Andres had believed it to be the key ingredient – as he had called it – to his life-long search for the ultimate cure to everything. Diseases, poisons, curses, spells – Andres had tested them all out on young Draven even before he had learned how to walk. When they had failed to affect him as was expected, leaving him completely healthy and unaltered, Andres had regularly drained a portion of Draven's blood, not realizing that its resilience would decrease at an exponential rate once the crimson liquid met air, making it completely useless after mere moments of leaving Draven's body.

A truth which Draven's mother had sworn her young son into secrecy for, fearing Andres would end his own child's life if he ever were to discover that Draven was no longer of any use to him. Just like he had done with his mother.

"No," the king said.

"No?"

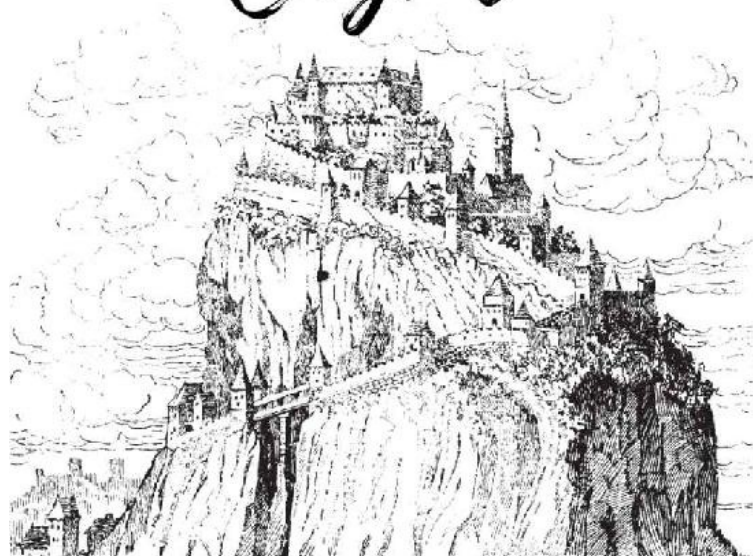
"No," he repeated, not backing down. "You cannot have my daughter."

"I wasn't asking for your permission." He stood up, towering over Roderick. "I will have her, or I will stop giving Raina my blood. She will fall into deep slumber a year from now, and you and your petty queen will wither away by her side, until you are nothing but ashes in the wind." Turning, he shouted back, "Sign the papers and say your final goodbyes, Your Majesty. I will come for her at sundown."



Chapter

Eight



Ch. 8



here was someone in her room.

^TShe could feel the intense waves of energy from her intruder hitting her as Raina lay motionless in bed, her lids closed as she pretended to be asleep.

How had they gotten in? Her chambers were in a secluded part of the palace, a lone tower that had only one door by which it could be entered. A door that was heavily guarded at all times. No one could get by without alerting the watch, which meant—

The window.

Shit. Had she left it open last night? Her mind raced, scrambling to recall her last steps before going to bed. Even if she had left it open, there was no possible way that anyone could have climbed that high without drawing attention to themselves.

The energy in the room shifted.

Stilling further, even though Raina was already as still as the grave, she let her senses wander, reaching out to her surroundings, desperately trying to gain some knowledge of her intruder's whereabouts.

A shadow passed over her stretched out form, one so massive that it kept approaching, stretching over Raina, blocking out every ray of moonlight, so thick and dense that she physically felt it press down on her chest.

Darkness shouldn't be able to do that. Shouldn't be able to touch her. Stroke her. Whisper sweet nothings in her ear. It shouldn't leave her skin burning and insides trembling. Nor should it send her heart galloping, lungs on the verge of collapsing, as it leaned down over her, enveloping Raina in its warmth.

Feather-light touches glided across her bare arm, her skin pebbling beneath it. So gentle, yet so heavy with unspoken words, spanning across her shoulder and the delicate curve of her neck, spreading over until it latched around her throat, firmly pressing against the strong beat of her pulse.

She should have been afraid, should have been screaming for help as she felt the unmistakable pads of large fingers against her flesh. Should have lashed out, demanding answers. Instead, heat pooled in her belly, cascading over her aching body. Her nipples hardened. Her core clenched with need, begging for attention.

And yet, through it all, she remained frozen, her breath controlled, the rise and fall of her chest not giving away the inner turmoil that this stranger's gentle touch was evoking in Raina.

She dared not open her eyes, fearing that the spell would be broken, fearing the discovery that it was all in her head. That the storm raging inside of her was a fragment of the endless fantasies that had plagued her ever since Draven had dragged her into the woods.

She could still feel his touch, feel his fingers moving inside of her. His tongue stroking her.

A light moan escaped her then, the memory igniting her blood, the almost erotic whispers against her skin urging her on.

The darkness stilled, the fingers resting around her throat.

Her hand moved. Down, down it went, skimming over her nightgown, ignoring the little voice in her head, telling her to open her eyes. To gaze

upon the face of her intruder.

She ignored it all, as her legs spread, her fingers disappearing into her panties, finding her swollen clit. A light caress against it, teasing, and then – ecstasy, as she pressed down on it, rubbing the pulsing nub with fluid motions, inserting another one in her soaked center. Pumping, grinding, moaning. She felt the heat rise, ever so slightly spreading through her body, and yet – it wasn't enough. Her fingers weren't enough. She needed more, needed *something* to fill the emptiness inside of her screaming for *so much more* as her pussy wept with arousal.

“Draven,” she whispered out loud, her lids still bolted shut, not wanting to wake up from this dream, the one where it wasn't her fingers that were playing her like a fiddle but his skilled, masculine ones, the very same ones that had brought her to the edge of pure bliss over and over again before taking it away.

Was it all just a dream?

She didn't know anymore. Her reality convoluted, blending with her thoughts, with her fantasies. Of a winged half-god, the one that had awakened something dormant inside of Raina, something that she desperately wanted to cling on to, no matter the repercussions on her already broken heart.

“Draven,” she exhaled again, arching her back, her fingers speeding up, not realizing that her panties were no longer covering her timid movements, but now lay somewhere on the floor, discarded deftly by the darkness itself.

Tabitha's spell. Hecate's curse. Her parents. The kingdom. None of it mattered anymore. Only the feeling of rapture slowly spreading through her.

If only she had given in to Draven. If only she had said those three little words that he longed to hear. She couldn't though, couldn't give him the satisfaction of them when he had hurt her so much. When he had rejected her, ripped her young heart out and left her out to bleed. He didn't deserve those words from her, as much as they were true. And oh, how they were true.

Raina's heart still beat for him, as betrayed as she still felt, after all these years. Even after giving her his very valid explanations, she still hurt. And she wanted him to prove to her that they weren't just that – *explanations*. She wanted something tangible, something lasting. Something that would undoubtedly show her his true feelings for her.

Her back shot up from the mattress as a new sensation took over. Her thighs widened, the distance between them easily able to accommodate broad shoulders that, if Raina were to pretend for just one moment, could have belonged to a certain dark haired immortal. It could have been his tongue that she felt licking her soaked folds, drinking from her pulsing core. Devouring her pussy with such passion that she felt every stroke in her soul, every flick in the beat of her heart.

“Draven,” she moaned out loud, fisting the sheets. Her fantasy gripping her trembling thighs, firm hands holding her down. Stealing every one of her breaths.

Her body locked up, and then – exploded. Thrashing against the darkness with only a singular word echoing around her – Draven. Draven. Draven. And when the daze receded, when she had finally come to her senses and her courage finally showed its face, Raina opened her eyes.

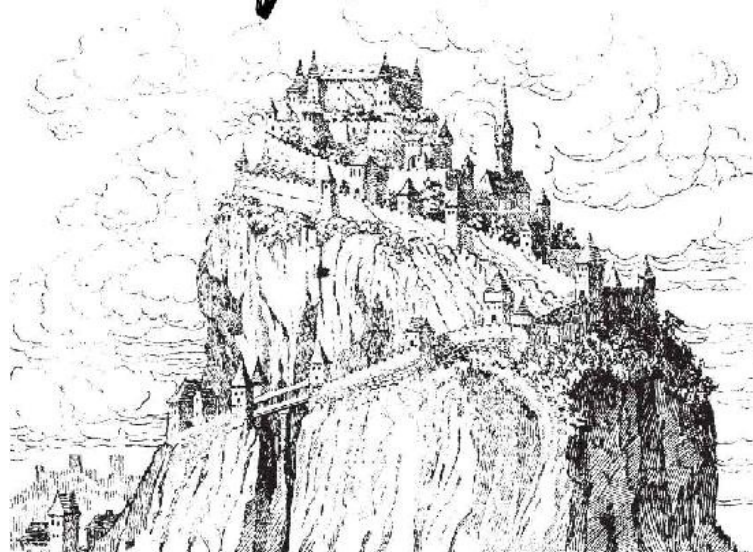
And gasped.

She was lying on her bed, a never-ending ocean of mulberry lily petals surrounding her for as far as the eye could see.



Chapter

Nine



Ch. 9



It is said that one remembers scent the longest. That even after all physical proof of another's existence has passed, scent still lingers in one's memory. So alive and present that it plays tricks on the mind. Confusing us into believing that the person is still with us while, somehow, just out of reach.

After twenty years, Draven could still smell his mother's floral scent. Could still recall the jasmine notes that would bask her form whenever she stepped close to him. Whenever she comforted him after one of his father's many experiments.

He had been so young then, barely six years old, when Andres had made him watch as he disposed of his mother's lifeless body, throwing it over the cliff at Castle Manhella, their home. Daring her to defy him, to come alive midair, to spread her magnificent black wings once more and fly away to her freedom.

Instead, Draven had watched as her frail body had plummeted to the raging sea below, disappearing beneath its obsidian surface, never to be seen again. He hadn't shed a single tear as he had observed it all, his tiny heart shattering into countless miniscule fragments as he realized that his mother was never coming back.

Andres had left him standing there, on the edge, unbothered by what he had done, by the one life that he had ended and the other that he had consequently ruined. Not even after three nights had gone by and little Draven had still remained standing in the same spot, frozen in place, unable

to move lest his mother pop out of the water, shouting for his aid, his father had not come.

When an entire week had gone by and Andres had finally returned to fetch him, Draven had wordlessly followed the man back to the castle, and in the dead of night, destroyed his mother's garden. One hundred sangria lily flowers had been uprooted by his tiny hands, left to shrivel up and die under the Sun. Just as his soul had shriveled up and died. Just as his mother had left him and died.

As he had stood there, relishing in the destruction that he had created, a single tear had finally made its way down his small cheek.

Too late, he realized his mistake.

Too late, regret hit him.

Too late, to take it all back and mend his error. The damage had been done, the last trace of his mother's existence wiped from their home.

Hatred had bloomed in his shattered little heart, taking root in the tiny arteries and vast chambers, pulling at the broken pieces until it became the sole thing holding his organ together. He had needed it to survive, to strengthen his resolve for destroying his father. Without hatred, he would have fallen apart. Without hatred, he would have disappeared into the void.

That night, Draven had lain awake, staring at the ceiling of his room. Contemplating on how he would go about his revenge. But more than anything, he had felt so alone. If only he had someone to call his own.

As if summoned by his dreary thoughts, a giant black raven had landed on his windowsill, croaking at young Draven until he could no longer ignore the bird and approached it. He might have been afraid had he not been familiar with the eerie creatures that had made Castle Manhella their home.

They were vicious beings by nature, but for some reason, they had taken a liking to Draven ever since he had been a mere babe. Both were outcasts in their home, and that feeling of not belonging anywhere, of being shunned by their surroundings, had perhaps been their common bonding point.

And so, Draven had cried his heart out that night while his feathered companion stood watch, silently providing him comfort and solace the only way that it could, soaking in his agony and despair. He had been only six years old at the time, and yet, Draven had already lived through great horror.

One that would forever leave a mark on his soul.

When he had woken up the following morning, the raven had been waiting for him at the exact same spot, the only sign that it had ever left a tiny speck of blood on its ebony beak. Croaking incessantly until Draven had finally relented and followed the bird down to his mother's gardens, the very same ones where a single sangria lily flower had awaited him, standing proudly amongst the field of decimated ones.

Shocked at the discovery, Draven had carefully tended to the flower, pouring all of his love and care into it, not allowing it to wither and die, until all one hundred sangria lily flowers covered his mother's gardens, once more.

Now, as he stood waiting for his princess and bride to make an appearance, he recalled another scent that had haunted him relentlessly for years, one that he had breathed in the night before as he greedily ate out his little petal.

Draven hadn't planned it, hadn't thought the possibility of Raina allowing him between her thighs even existed when he had visited her in the dead of night. He had wanted to watch her while she slept, fearing Roderick might try to send her away or hide his little bird before Draven could collect her.

Nothing would surprise him at this point.

But when he had heard her call out his name while pleasuring herself, something had snapped in him. It hadn't mattered whether or not Raina had been awake or blissfully dreaming, the mere fact that she had been imagining *him* between her thighs was an aphrodisiac that he never knew he craved.

She tasted like the sweetest fucking poison, one that Draven intended to drink for the rest of his damn life, lapping at her heavenly gates like a feral dog. Savoring every silky drop on his tongue like the greedy bastard that he was.

Once he had her in his home, he would show her just how much he planned to stay true to that promise. Last night hadn't even scratched the surface of what he was going to do to his fragile little bird. Of the love and devotion that he would spoil her with.

He grinned, dick thickening in his pants at the thought as Raina finally made an appearance, her beautiful face set in a deep scowl.

An amused chuckle escaped him.

No doubt his stubborn Petal had thrown a fit once Roderick had informed her of her new status and title. No doubt, she had foolishly believed that she would one day actually be free to choose her future husband. No doubt, she wanted to murder Draven in a terribly horrific way for taking that choice away from her.

Once again, he didn't give a single flustered fuck about any of it. She'd accept her fate because there was no other option, not for her and certainly not for him. Their lives were irrevocably intertwined, ever since that first day when he had given her his blood, when she had unknowingly ingested it though Andres' many potions.

There was no going back, not now.

Not ever.

The only bed that she would ever be warming would be *his*. The only mouth that would ever be kissing those succulent red lips of hers would be *his*. The only arms that she would ever seek comfort and solace in would be *his*.

She might loathe him now, but it was only temporary, Raina's fury at her freedom being taken away masking her true feelings for him. He knew this to be true, and so he felt no remorse for what he was about to do.

Her big blue eyes zeroed in on Draven, taking his breath away as she stormed towards him.

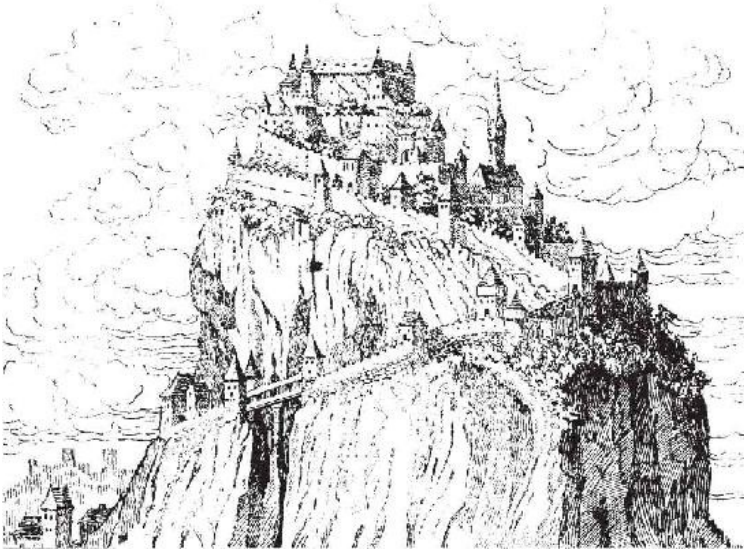
"How dare you!?" her voice shook with anger, making her cheeks flush so deliciously. "You had no right—"

His arms shot out, pulling her against him. "I would say that I'm sorry but that would be a blatant lie, princess. It seems that when it comes to you, I have no self-control." Her fists pounded against his hard chest, his hold turning punishing as his wings spread and prepared to take off, purring low so that only she could hear, "Save your energy, *wife*. It's our wedding night, and I intend to have you thoroughly drained by the end of it."



Chapter

Ten



Ch. 10



he white robe hung loosely down her slender frame, the single belt around her waist the only thing holding it in place. Her skin glowed in the faint candlelight, the scented oils that had been rubbed in by the attendants that Draven had so generously appointed to her as soon as they landed on the ground embellishing her soft curves.

Castle Manhella, her new home, was an imposing stone giant of a structure, with eight towering spires reaching towards the gloomy sky from its almost entirely black walls. Foreboding ebony birds that she later learned were ravens flew in haphazard ways around the towers, their occasional shrills splitting the sky, making the tiny hairs on her arms stand on end.

Draven had introduced her to the castle staff, his father – the dark wizard in whose company Raina had always felt extremely uneasy – not being in attendance at the time, having been preoccupied with whatever new experiment he was currently working on in the castle dungeons, his private abode as Draven had quickly informed her.

Thank God for that small mercy. She hoped their paths never crossed again now that Raina was no longer drinking his concoction.

The doors to her chambers slid open. Her heart stuttered as the half-naked winged immortal stepped forward, closing the door behind him. They stared at each other, Raina's skin on fire, insides burning like a wildfire from his piercing gaze.

The lock turned.

Her breath caught.

He took a step forward, she backed up. Another step forward, another step back, their dance continuing until her ass hit a dresser.

Draven's very naked chest pressed against her, his massive wings spread out, arms braced around her middle as he leaned in to mutter by her ear, "Seems you've run out of space," his lips trailed down her neck, leaving goose bumps in their wake, "Not that it matters. There isn't a place in this world where you could hide from me that I wouldn't find you, wife."

God damn it. The things that *one* blasted word evoked in her. It wasn't normal and it certainly shouldn't have been possible, yet here she was, panting like an animal in heat.

Steadying her hands against the edge of the dresser, Raina tried to ignore the frantic beating of her heart and the rapidly building arousal between her thighs. Reflexively, her head tilted, Draven's breath caressing the curve of her neck. His tongue slid out, licking a path across her throat as he cradled the back of her head, angling it as he pleased.

"Tell me, wife," a gentle kiss, "who were you imagining last night, while your pretty little fingers played with your cunt?"

Mortified, she could only shake her head. "I don't know what you're talking about. I did no such thing."

A large hand wrapped around the back of her neck. "Oh, but you did," another kiss, this time on the corner of her mouth, "I was there, little bird," licking her lips, "I saw everything," his tongue finally diving in to tangle with hers as she opened for him.

A satisfied little sigh left her.

He kissed her like his life depended on it. Like he would die if their lips were ever to part. Like he wanted to steal the very air out of her lungs, the very thoughts out of her mind, the very beat from her heart. Even as he lifted her on top of the dresser and parted her shaking thighs, their lips

stayed glued together, their tongues greedily stroking each other.

The room disappeared around Raina, her head spinning, at a battle with herself and her conflicting emotions. It would be pointless to deny it any longer, to pretend like she could continue without this man – her *husband* – for another day.

At first she had been livid when her father had informed her that he had married her off to the vampire demon, not being able to stomach the idea of her choice being taken away from her. But after a few moments, her anger had been replaced by excitement and unbridled joy. He would have been her first choice anyways, the *only* choice all along.

Raina had only been prolonging the inevitable, and the inevitable was happening at that very moment as his thick fingers opened her folds, teasing her sopping entrance before finally sinking in, his thumb drawing circles over her swollen clit.

“Mmm,” he purred, pushing in two more digits, “you swallow me so well, wife.”

Her walls clenched around him, her head falling back against his hand, nipples turning to hard peaks begging to be touched.

As if reading her mind, his mouth latched around one sharp bud, sucking on it over her robe, then the other one, until she was gushing all over his fingers, her hips rocking as she chased her orgasm.

“I want to hear you say it, Raina.”

Her lids felt heavy, the high of the impending crash so close yet still so far away. She ignored him, wanting to know how far he would go, how hard he would work for her to finally admit that she belonged to him.

Growling, he pulled out, then kneeling, threw her legs over his shoulders, and started devouring her pussy.

“Ah, that feels so good.” Leaning back on one hand, her other fingers disappeared into his massive wings, pulling on the silky feathers as the pressure in her core built once more.

“Say it,” he growled again, his strikingly furious eyes locked on Raina, tongue flicking over her clit before flattening out and swiping across her entire cunt.

A kernel of heat bloomed in her lower stomach, threatening to consume her. “Fuck, oh, fuck,” moaning, her lids hooded, hands flying to his head. Gripping his hair until she was sure she would rip it out of his skull.

“You haven’t learnt your lesson yet, little bird,” he stood up, the bastard, abandoning his position on the floor. “You *will* say those words to me. We have an eternity now that you’re here, with me, in our home.”

She groaned in frustration, her pussy drenched thoroughly, her clit throbbing painfully. The robe felt heavy, its mere presence causing her skin to ache. It slipped off her frame, the cool air causing a new wave of shivers to erupt all over Raina.

Draven’s hungry gaze swept over her, zeroing in on her nipples as he pinched one then the other, then both at once, twisting them before rubbing the hard pearls, playing with her so expertly.

“Please,” she begged, not giving a damn about how pathetic and weak she sounded. “Please, fuck me. I need you, I can’t take this anymore. Please.”

“Only if you say my name first.”

“Draven, please,” she bit her lip, rocking her hips on the wooden surface, spreading her legs nice and wide for him. “Please fuck me.”

He pinched her nipples again, pulling at them until she hissed. “Who am I?”

She swallowed, sweat breaking along her brow. “My husband.”

His pants dropped, his heavy cock nudging her entrance as he pushed her knees all the way back. “Again.”

“My husband,” she panted, watching as the swollen crown glided through her slick folds. They both groaned in unison, his big dick fully planting itself inside of her. Then he began to move.

“Who’s fucking you, wife?”

“My husband.”

“Who’s cock is filling your tight little cunt?”

“My husband’s,” she croaked, half aware of anything but the feel of him as he ruthlessly drove into her.

“Who will take care of you? Who will you go to when you’re sad and lonely, when your heart is breaking from pain?”

His words hit her, not expecting such a blatant display of emotions from the man who seemed to be obsessed with claiming ownership over Raina. His beautiful eyes shone with genuine warmth and sincerity as he held her gaze, the true meaning of what he’d said finally stunning her into a reply, “My husband.”

As if a dam had shattered from her admission, Draven’s mouth crashed down, sucking her tongue before fully diving in. The dresser shook from the force of his thrusts, his balls slapping against her drenched pucker as he held her thighs up. “Now, be a good wife, and tell your husband who you belong to.”

She crashed, “You,” and detonated. The orgasm tore through her like a raging bull, eviscerating every thought, every doubt, every shred of uncertainty, until only Draven remained, and the blissful high pulsing through her veins as thick cords of hot cum shot into her spent pussy, sealing their lives together once and for all.

The very last realization that struck her before she drifted off to blissful sleep was the sheer joy that she felt at finally being in the arms of the only man that she had ever loved all along.



Chapter

Eleven



Ch. 11



faint buzzing filled his ears. Rolling to the side, his arm snaked around his little petal, pulling her flush against his chest. She was still blissfully asleep, the Sun a few hours away from making its appearance over the horizon.

Glancing over her shoulder, he could see the soft rise of her round breasts, a clear sign that she was, indeed, oblivious to the world around her.

Her nipples were red and bruised, but still as hard as they were when he had started sucking on them hours ago.

Chuckling, he thanked the heavens for such a responsive little wife. Weeks had passed since he had brought her to his castle, since that first night when she had finally admitted to being only his.

They had spent their days in blissful harmony, reconnecting and learning new things about each other. Their nights had been for rutting like animals, Draven taking her in every corner of the castle, in every hole, multiple times in a row, until she could no longer stand or swallow and would collapse from exhaustion. Even then, he couldn't get enough of her, sometimes even slipping into her warm pussy while she rested. Like now, as he spread her ass cheeks wide and shoved his dick into her already thoroughly soaked center.

Yes, he was a very lucky bastard, indeed.

A soft sigh left her, her eyes still shut as she arched her back to allow him deeper penetration.

"Shh, little bird, no need to wake. Your husband is just going to fill you up with your morning dose of warm milk, get you nice and ready for the day."

His cock leaked, pulsing violently as he rolled his hips, slipping an arm around her stomach to play with her tight nipples. In and out, round and round, he fucked her, his balls painfully heavy with his seed.

The buzzing in his ears intensified, his head throbbing as sudden pain zapped through his forehead.

"Fuck," he hissed, stilling. When was the last time that he had fed? His mind scrambled. "Shit," as he realized the severity of the situation.

"Draven?" Raina's sleepy voice met him, his cock still balls deep inside of her. "What's wrong?"

Rolling his hips again, he bit her shoulder. "Nothing, Petal, go back to sleep," then began to drill into her.

She moaned into the pillow, "Stop trying to distract me. Something is wrong," gasping as he nicked her neck, "I know you. Don't try to hide it from me."

"Come for your husband and I'll tell you." Lifting her leg over his hip, he played with her clit as his dick drove into her, pressing down on it until he felt her walls locking in around him. "That's it," he slapped her swollen nub, "Just. Like. That," and again.

She screamed as she exploded, pussy fluttering around him, draining his cock as he unloaded inside of her.

Back hitting the mattress, his head pounded. He closed his eyes, straining against the pain.

"Draven, you don't look well. What's wrong? Tell me what's happening."

"It's fine, I just need to feed."

A moment of silence, and then, "When was the last time that you fed?"

"I don't remember. A month ago, perhaps."

"What!?" she shook him, his eyes reluctantly snapping open to see a very worried expression staring back at him. "Why haven't you been feeding, Draven? You'll hurt yourself!"

"I refuse to drink any blood that isn't yours, princess, and I didn't want to force you into something that you weren't ready for. I've managed so far, I can wait for as long as you need me to."

Moisture welled in her eyes, her lips trembling. "You starved yourself? For me?"

A lone tear finally escaped her big doe eyes, Draven wiping it away with the pad of his thumb. "I would rip my own heart out if you asked it of me. I would drain myself dry if that was the price for your feeling of safety." His big hand landed on the back of her neck, pulling her down. "I once told you that I wouldn't drink your blood without your consent, and I meant it." He kissed her, her salty tears falling across his skin.

"Why would you do that? Why torture yourself?"

He searched her eyes, gathering the courage that he had lacked before to finally admit what rested in his heart, "Because I love you, Raina. And I would never do anything to hurt you."

"So, drink," her arm shot out, pressing her wrist against his lips.

"Princess," gently lowering her arm, he cupped her face, "I don't want your pity. You don't have to do this."

"I want to. You're my husband and you need to feed." She straddled him, his cock thickening in response as she took him in her fist, his big crown lining up with her opening. "Let me take care of you," lowering herself until he was fully sheathed inside of her, "like you've taken care of me." Her hips lifted before plunging back down, then again, over and over without pause, until they were both groaning from pleasure. His large hands gripped her ass, pushing her further onto his weeping cock, their juices mixing together in the most delicious way.

"Petal," his voice was hoarse, his energy depleted, "I'm going to blow a load in your pretty pink pussy, are you ready?"

She nodded, baring her neck to him as she ground down, "Feed from me, husband. I trust you."

His hand snaked around the back of her neck, bringing it close until his lips touched her smooth skin, until the heady scent of her life's essence flowing beneath the surface hit him like a battering ram. Nostrils flaring, he inhaled, then licked a trail over her jugular.

His fangs dropped.

"I love you, Raina," and bit down. His cock jerked, shooting his hot seed deep into her pulsing core just as the first drop of the crimson liquid met his lips. Wild berries and forest wine exploded across his tongue, filling his mouth as he sucked hard on her neck, rushing down his parched throat until his whole body sang from ecstasy.

Down, down it went, filling his depleted cells, erasing the fatigue and starvation, reviving his mind until all he could feel was Raina's life source pulsing through his veins. Her body jerking against him as her orgasm ripped through her, his name on her lips like a prayer of worship.

Unlatching himself from her flesh, he watched, transfixed, as her blood trickled down her neck and collarbone, finally coming to a rest on her pert nipple. Unable to help himself, he swiped his tongue over it, sucking hard, savoring the sweet taste, then again, smearing the thick liquid across her chest as fresh beads of blood trickled down her skin, until her entire front was a beautiful red canvas.

A sudden sting to his own neck jolted him.

"I'm sorry, I—I don't know what came over me," Raina said, looking mortified as she continued to stare pointedly at his skin. A drop of crimson pooled at the corner of her mouth.

Realization hit him just as she was about to scramble backwards. "Don't," he warned, pulling her back onto his lap, "I'm your husband, little bird. Your mate, your friend. Your protector. It's normal for you to have these urges, especially since my blood is not foreign to you." He tilted his head, angling his neck towards her. "Have your fill, little wife."

Hesitantly, she flicked her tongue over the tiny puncture wounds, repositioning her mouth over her teeth marks, waiting for a reaction from him.

“Bite me, Raina,” he pushed her down onto his cock, splitting her pussy in half, guiding her back and forth until she was a panting mess. “Mark me.” His fangs dropped, skimming her delicate skin, leaving shivers in his wake. “Make me bleed, woman.”

Their gazes locked just before her teeth sunk in. An eruption of emotions played across her delicate features right before his own fangs pierced her flesh. His cock jerked as he felt her pussy swell, then sprayed inside of her, coating her walls in white. Blood flowed down their shoulders, the coppery smell combining with the heady scent of their fucking, permeating the air around them.

“I love you,” her soft voice spoke up, plastering her blood covered chest onto his equally crimson one.

“I love you, too, Petal. Forever and always.”



Chapter Twelve



Ch. 12



er parents stared at Raina, clearly anxious and, dare she say, frightened, by her intimidating husband, who was standing behind her, looking at the royals like he would break their necks should they attempt anything suspicious.

"Well, it seems like you'll get along just fine." She patted Draven's arm. "I'm going to go look at my old room. Play nice."

Humming in approval, he leaned down to plant a kiss on the top of her head. "Don't go too far, wife. You know I can't stand to be apart from you for long."

Grinning with amusement, she left the three of them in her father's study, sending a silent prayer to the heavens that she'd find her parents in one piece when she returned. Knowing them, especially her mother's knack for infuriating her husband, she wouldn't put it past the woman to try provoking him into a reaction.

Raina's feet took her up the countless steps leading to her old chambers, the tower where she had once shed tears of sorrow for her gloomy future now only a distant memory, one that had been replaced by love and happy moments in her new home with her doting husband. Had it not been her twenty-first birthday, they would have still been at Castle Manhella, lounging around in her favorite garden or planting new flowers around the grounds, an activity that had helped Raina over the span of the year since Draven had brought her there to dissociate from Tabitha's spell and the moment of truth.

Draven had insisted he bring her back to her old home, to see her parents, if only to put her mind at ease and witness for herself that they were, truly, doing just fine.

The ivory door loomed before her, pulling Raina's thoughts back to the present. Chest heaving, lungs greedily inhaling, she pushed the wooden panel, heart thrashing against her rib cage from the sudden onslaught of emotions.

"What—" her words lodged in her throat. Her once feminine room was now void of all furniture, not even the curtains being left behind. "Where is everything?"

She spun around, unable to come to terms with what she was seeing. A tinge of sadness cracked at her heart, the fact that her parents had erased all signs of her from her childhood home like a slap of reality that she had thought would never come.

Her bed was gone. The chest where she had kept the sangria lily petals like lost treasures, gone. Her dresser, her clothes, her nightstand. All gone, vanished, as if a little girl had never inhabited the space at all.

Instead, in the middle of the room, stood a breathtaking gold spindle, its wheel turning all on its own, as if pushed by invisible hands. Curious at how it was possible and wanting to explore the piece of machinery from up close, Raina let her walls down, stalking towards it until only an inch of space separated her from it.

"Fascinating," she breathed, eyes tracking the movement, searching for the source of such impossible magic.

A glint caught her eye. Lowering herself until she was eye level with the contraption, she noticed a hairthin needle sticking out, pointing to the sky like a beacon. It looked extremely sharp, yet for some reason, Raina had the urge to touch it. To test it, just to prove herself right.

A very stupid decision, no doubt, for no sooner than her skin grazed the tip, a drop of blood was already forming on the pad of her finger.

Snatching her hand back, she stared at it, watching, mesmerized, as it thickened and pooled, dripping down onto the ivory floor.

Her head felt light.

Her lids heavy.

Her body crumpled, but before it could hit the ground, a pair of strong arms caught her. The last thing that she saw before her eyes closed indefinitely, were a pair of magnificent wings as a soothing voice enveloped her, cradling her to a warm chest.

“You’re safe, little petal. Sleep in peace. I’ll be waiting for you when you wake up, whenever that may be.”



Epilogue

MANHELLA

100 years later

“Draven,” a gruff voice said, “It’s time.”

Wordlessly, he stood up, straightening the fabric over his chest. The Moon hung high on the sky, illuminating his path as he walked down to the castle gardens.

A large glass dome met him as he hurriedly made his way to it, his heart pounding like a caged animal. For a century, he had meticulously tended to the bed of sangria lily flowers that covered the entirety of the grounds inside of the structure, not allowing anyone but himself to enter it.

It held a treasure far greater than any royal jewel. A treasure so invaluable that he would murder any man that tried to take it away from him. A treasure that he had killed his own father for, when Draven had caught him snooping around it, threatening to use it for one of his sick experiments.

Draven had been livid when he had caught the man, his fury knowing no bounds as he had ripped Andres’s heart out without an ounce of remorse. Soaking the ground with his father’s blood before throwing it over the same cliff where his mother’s body had been claimed by the sea.

His princess. His wife. His one and only was in that glass dome, blissfully asleep, as if time had stopped when she had pricked her finger, when Tabitha’s spell had finally come to fruition.

For one hundred years, Draven had watched over her slumbering form, tending to it as if she were awake. Now, the one hundred year mark was up, and it was time that he finally woke her.

Fingers itching, heart pounding, he approached her resting form. Her long blond locks framed her face, her rosy cheeks giving her a healthy glow as he leaned down over her. Gently petting her head, caressing the soft lines of her pretty face. Stroking her plump lips.

“Wake up, my love,” he whispered, as his lips landed on hers. “Wake up, come back to me. Let me see your beautiful eyes.” He kissed her again, pouring all of his love, obsession, possession, need, into it. Tongue gliding across the seam of her lips, splitting it before diving in.

A heavy sigh met his motions, Raina’s mouth responding, tongue tangling with his, slender arms wrapping around his neck as she pulled him flush against her.

A salty tear escaped down his cheek, landing on her equally moist face, before picking her up and cradling her in his arms.

“What happened to my room? When did we come back?”

He chuckled, aware that she had no recollection of the events after she had pricked her finger. “It’s been some time, little one. A lot of things have changed.”

Confused, she pressed on, “I don’t remember us flying. I must have fallen asleep.”

“Yes, princess, something like that.”

Her eyes brightened. “Oh, I had the most vivid dreams, Draven! They felt so real.”

“Mmm hmm,” he hummed, carrying her bridal style up to their chambers. “I bet they were.”

“Yes, we were on a boat, and were sailing...” she trailed off, her voice getting increasingly excited by the second as she went into full detail.

Completely unaware that they weren’t dreams at all, but adventures that Draven had taken her on as she had continued on sleeping.

One day, he would tell her. But for now, it was enough that he had his little petal by his side, once and for all.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bella Durand is the monster romance alter ego of dark fantasy romance author Isabella Khalidi. Her books are steamy and dark, with tormented main heroes and brave heroines that strive for love and a sense of belonging. When not creating new worlds, she can be found helping out in her family's cozy little restaurant in a small town in Europe.

Lilies for the Cursed is her second published monster romance novel, following *Roses for the Damned*, with the *Wicked Creatures Tales* as her debut monster romance series.

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WORKS BY BELLA DURAND (2023/2024):

1. Wicked Creatures Tales

Roses for the Damned – A Hunchback of Notre-Dame Retelling

<https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B0CJ39DSHP/>

Upcoming books in the series:

Poppies for the Hunted – A Robin Hood Retelling

Daisies for the Broken – A Frog Prince Retelling

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